

GILC 63
CAMERON

WRITINGS

MANI, [19--]

[2 pages]



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MANI
Barbara M. Cameron

- I. We sat at Baker's Beach in the evening. We sat in the car listening to my tapes of country music and drank from a whiskey bottle. It was Robin and I, this we, that sat at the beach for you. I could hear your laughter as the gulls flew by and see your wild gestures in the pounding of the waves. Your dark Papago eyes seemed to be silent in the hills, in the ships that moved toward the harbor. The hazy blue over the ocean melded into our numbness, into our inability to accept your death. We left the beach driving to Herbie's with our whiskey and thinking of you. Each stop sign seemed to hold back the tears, the anguish, the loss and the anger. At Herbie's there was cornmeal and food, offerings by a small group of Indians in an apartment complex on Stockton Street. There was no gentle desert wind to accept our tobacco smoke, there was no desert sun to greet your passing, there was no desert earth to sit upon, to connect us with other relatives who have gone on.
- II. I remembered my cousin Adrian's funeral. He was murdered too. At his wake, his brother kept asking him to wake up, please wake up Adrian, it's time to go home. I walked out. I walked away to sit by myself. I wanted to walk away from Herbie's too. We seemed so alone. At Adrian's funeral, I had to suppress smiles and laughter when they blew taps and shot the rifles. I wanted to laugh and laugh. I wanted to laugh to release the pain. Death and funerals are intimate. It's as if we the living are passing through the twilight too. We become suspended in our agony and grief. I sat at Herbie's thinking I have done this before, I've had lots of practice in mourning, in experiencing the death of loved ones. It should be easy. It should be easy.
- III. I spent a couple of days telephoning our mutual friends to say.... Mani is dead. He's been killed. Each time that I said it, a deeper disbelief would set in. I finally reached a point when I would say Mani is dead, that I became unsure of it's truth. I got very worried thinking that I am telling a cruel lie to our friends. What if Mani calls or someone else calls and says Barbara what have you been doing saying that Mani is dead. Why are you lying. It's a terrible joke that you are playing.
- IV. Robin and I went to the Feather River to visit Chrystos in the mountains. We spent one night camping along the river. Whenever I'm in the mountains, I stare at the horizon half expecting a line of Indians on horses to be there, staring, just like in the old westerns. Or I expect Indians to be crouching behind the trees. Robin tried to teach me how to swim but it was more fun to watch her swim. I almost enjoyed myself that afternoon because the sun was so warm and the air was fresh. The river water seemed friendly and happy to be going on its way. The evening was difficult. I've always found that time of day to be lonely, when the sun has set but it's not yet dark and the air becomes still and quiet. The colors are soft and I can almost believe that we live in a gentle world. When night came we tried to sleep on the river bank. We marveled at the stars. The

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- IV. trillions of twinkling stars seeming to share a secret so divine, a secret I wanted to know. We expected the stars to light up in a pattern that danced your name, Mani Lucas, Mani Lucas, across the sky. We got very excited because we really believed you were going to turn on this sky sign to let us know you were there. I thought the many falling stars were telling us, yes we are happy to welcome Mani to his new home. There were train tracks across the river, up the hill. Everytime the trains in the night came by with their huge headlights sweeping across the river, I thought of you and Marcus walking in the alley unaware, so unaware of the the danger of the bullets.....
- V. I will think of you during your last visit. You came to the door. What a surprise especially since your chic faggot haircut had grown into a shoulder length mop and you had those funny paid for by the Indian public health glasses on. That evening as you sat in our living room, I knew I would never see you again. I wanted to tell you that I saw the danger but it would not have made sense to you or I at that time. We burned your ^{come} creosote for days after you left. You told me that you wanted to ^{come} to San Francisco bearing Papago gifts to thank Robin and I for our friendship. You have done that.

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